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Traveler, 78, boasts tours of other planets

Diner's Club secretary cites astral projection

By DARRELL LAURANT
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SALEM — The weird thing about William Goodlett is that there's nothing weird about him.

He lives in a big, broad-shouldered Victorian house on an Anytown, U.S.A., side street in Salem. The house is cluttered as only someone who reads four books a week can clutter it.

He seemed glad a visitor had stopped by on a recent morning, but said he didn't have much time to talk.

"I've got to run off at 11:30," he said. "I'm secretary of the Diner's Club, and we've got a meeting."

It was just after 10 a.m. Goodlett was dressed in slacks, sweater, flannel shirt (obviously an old friend), faded running shoes and a western string tie. A robust 78 years old, he resembled everyone's favorite grandfather. When he talked about his travels, which have been extensive to say the least, his eyes crinkled and twinkled.

"I have done astral projection my whole life," he said quietly. "I've been all over the world."

Not to mention the galaxy.

Goodlet, in fact, is a very big deal in the world of astral projection, interplanetary travel and the like.

Ruth Montgomery's best-seller "Aliens Among Us" devotes an entire chapter to him. She calls Goodlett "one of the most fascinating men I ever met."

Even forgetting the astral projection stuff, Goodlett is unusual. He is an artist. He has taught dance, pioneered a method of teaching reading phonetically and served as a cryptographer in World War II.

And he says he travels to other planets — not just Mars or Saturn. He says he goes to anonymous worlds like "The Planet of the Tall Trees" and "The Planet of the Small Islands."

How?

"I just go," Goodlett said. "I ask to go, and that's it."

Sometimes his requests go unheeded. It happens every few years, and he travels outside of his body.

Dreams, perhaps?

Goodlett shook his head gently.

"With dreams, I'm outside looking in," he said. "I know what a dream is. This is different. I'm there."

When he returns, he makes drawings. He pulled out a dozen or so, incredibly elaborate and bizarre, filled with unusual creatures and landscapes.

William Goodlett is not alone. Actress-author Shirley MacLaine has gone on record as believing in astral projection and out-of-body experiences. The Monroe Institute in Amherst County has been set up to study them. Goodlett gets supportive calls from all over the world, he pointed out, many congratulating him for "coming out of the closet."

Which is nice. But Goodlett doesn't care if people think he's eccentric. Back in 1978, he said, he died of a heart attack.

"I was sitting in that chair," he said, pointing toward an overstuffed wingback in a corner of his kitchen. "And my heart stopped. I felt myself coming out of my body. I heard beautiful music. I moved toward a light, and then something told me to go back. Since then, I haven't feared death."

Or ridicule.

By Goodlett's estimate, thousands of planets in our solar system harbor life, and "600 or so that have humans. I've seen creatures just like us," he said.

Viewers of the movie "Starman" may know what Goodlett is talking about. He believes interplanetary travelers always adopt the life form predominant on their planet of origin ("When in Rome..."), and that some of them have visited earth.

He believes he is or has been one of these and that he can recognize others.

"Occasionally," Goodlett said, "I find people I can communicate with telepathically."